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USIA-10

SUBJECT: SDP Chairman Tanner Speaks on Fenno-Soviet Relations

Dr. Väinö Tanner, Chairman of the Social Democratic Party, delivered a speech in Tampere on February 16, 1959. Most of the speech concerned the problem of Fenno-Soviet relations. As of possible interest to the Department, the Embassy is submitting a translation of those parts having to do with this matter (see Encl. No. 1).

In a hard-hitting account of the circumstances surrounding the fall of the Fagerholm Cabinet and the President's trip to Leningrad, the SDP leader asks "what does all this mean - - - did a majority government have to make way for a single-party cabinet - - - is this the price for neighborly harmony?" Dr. Tanner declared that "the SDP is not hostile towards the Soviet Union but it holds the opinion that while Finland must remain absolutely neutral we must also decide on our own internal affairs or we shall find outselves in the position of a protectorate."

For the Ambassador:

Eiler R. Cook
Second Secretary of Embassy

Enclosure:

1. Comments on Fenno-Soviet relations by Dr. Väinö Tanner.

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HELSINGIN SANOMAT
Feb. 17, 1959
(Excerpts)

Talking about Fenno-Soviet relations, Dr. Väinö Tanner mentioned in his Tampere speech on February 16:

"After the wars waged, these relations were based on the Peace Treaty and on the Agreement on Friendship, Collaboration and Mutual Aid of 1948. Everything seemed to go well until the friction began to manifest itself last autumn. It is of note that this friction particularly could be observed after the Fagerholm Cabinet had been formed. No pertinent reasons for the cooling of relations were visible. The Cabinet, as well as its predecessors, worked quite correctly as far as our relations with the Soviet Union were concerned. The Soviet Government did not make any remarks or take any exceptional measures. But we could not attend to our affairs. At first we were very much surprised at all this until it became clear that the reason for the cooling of relations was of domestic origin.

"The leadership of the Agrarian Party in Helsinki apparently had noticed that its influence on the Cabinet was less than expected. The Agrarian Party began to attack the Cabinet. As its weapon it chose foreign policy, which had thus far been the monopoly of our domestic Communists. The Communists, of course, were only too pleased to join in the game, and so did the politicians of the Social Democratic Opposition, who have become used to all political immorality.

"It goes without saying that behind the border they paid attention to this and passively wanted to see how the game would end. Finally, after an annoying jungle war, the Cabinet split from within after the Agrarian ministers had jumped out.

"It took six weeks to form a new Cabinet. After this result had been reached, the weather began to brighten and affairs could be attended to again. The Soviet Union was prepared to invite a delegation to discuss a trade agreement and these negotiations are in progress at the present time. A new Soviet Ambassador also has been appointed, and he is expected to arrive here tomorrow. The Finnish people will surely bid him welcome and wish him success in his work. In other respects, too, the coolness seems to have disappeared.

"But simple people are perplexed and keep asking what does all this really mean. Must a seven-party Cabinet enjoying the confidence of the people resign to make way for a one-party Cabinet, and must Mr. Korsimo also be represented in it? Is this the price of neighborly harmony?

"This is a question people expected to be explained in connection with the discussions that took place when the President recently met the Soviet Union's Prime Minister Khrushchev in Leningrad. What did they discuss?

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That is what we have not been informed. However, Prime Minister Khrushchev's luncheon speech, which has been issued here, give some idea of what Cabinet circles in the Soviet Union think. Mr. Khrushchev is an interesting speaker, open-minded and high-tempered. He assured us that the Soviet Government is very willing to develop relations between the two countries and expressed the wish that better and better results be reached in the future. But what the Finnish people wanted explained most--i.e. what had been the reason for the cooling of relations--no other reply was given than a reference to the composition of the Fagerholm Cabinet.

"Thus the reason for the coolness was the composition, and not the attitudes or deeds of the Fagerholm Cabinet. 'Behind Fagerholm's broad back' there were two Finnish citizens mentioned by name, who were said to 'be known for their hostile attitude towards the Soviet Union'. This misleading allegation apparently is the key to the whole conflict. Behind Fagerholm there were not only a couple of citizens, but the whole Social Democratic Party with its hundreds of thousands of voters, and together with it presumably the majority of the Finnish people, whose confidence the Cabinet enjoyed. And as for the SDP, it is not hostile towards the Soviet Union, and what reason would it have for a hostile attitude? It has been trying to bring the two countries closer to one another much earlier than many groups which changed their minds late, but which are now trying to appear as the pioneers of this issue. The SDP sticks to the mutual state agreements, which ought to be observed in the right sense on both sides. The SDP holds the opinion that at the same time Finland remains absolutely neutral in the great-power disputes, as an independent country, it must decide for itself on its internal affairs or else it will find itself in the position of a protectorate or become a similar autonomous state as it was during the Czar regime. A thought like this could not, of course, be included in Prime Minister Khrushchev's speech. Neighborly harmony between independent states cannot be established on such grounds that the stronger neighbor tries to determine the composition of the Cabinet. Good neighborly relations cannot be established either if only a part of the nation, certain parties, are considered to be friends, while others are classified among hostile elements. The whole nation is required for the establishment of a real and effective friendship.

"It might be right to make one more remark - when an effort is made to develop trade between two countries, there certainly are better means for developing it than to discontinue the exchange of trade all of a sudden, as if by sword. For commercial relations this is bad propaganda, since this may make the other party suspect that the same may happen again, and under really difficult conditions."

Translated by: A. Nopsanen